

ASIAN STUDIES MAJOR, B.A.–PERSIAN STUDIES CONCENTRATION

Persian (Farsi) is the official language of Iran, Afghanistan (where it is called Dari), and Tajikistan (where it is called Tajiki), and is spoken by over 100 million people worldwide. With a literary tradition that spans more than a millennium, Persian boasts one of the world's richest and most influential bodies of poetry, prose, philosophy, and historiography. Persian has played a major role in the cultural and intellectual history of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia.

The Persian Studies concentration provides students with a strong foundation in the Persian language while offering broad exposure to the cultures, histories, and literatures of the Persian-speaking world. Students develop language skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking through a sequenced curriculum that emphasizes authentic materials, including modern and classical literature, media, and film. Instruction integrates both formal (written) and colloquial (spoken) Persian, preparing students for academic research, professional use, and everyday communication.

In addition to language courses, students explore the rich traditions of Persianate societies through interdisciplinary offerings in literature, visual culture, cinema, religion, and history. Coursework covers both the pre-modern and modern periods, highlighting the intersections between Iran and neighboring regions such as the Arab world, Central Asia, and South Asia.

The Persian Studies concentration equips students with critical cultural literacy and global perspectives valuable in fields such as international relations, education, translation, journalism, nonprofit work, business, and academia. Graduates of the program are prepared for further study in Middle Eastern studies, comparative literature, and related disciplines.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Asian studies program, students should be able to:










- Identify or analyze significant aspects of the target cultures by interpreting texts and media
- Demonstrate proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in the target language
- Demonstrate experience in the use of the target language outside the language classroom

In addition to the program requirements, students must

- earn a minimum final cumulative GPA of 2.000
- complete a minimum of 45 academic credit hours earned from UNC–Chapel Hill courses
- take at least half of their major core requirements (courses and credit hours) at UNC–Chapel Hill
- earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.000 in the major core requirements. Some programs may require higher standards for major or specific courses.

For more information, please consult the degree requirements section of the catalog (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/degree-requirements/>).

The major requires eight core courses (24 credit hours), as described below.

Code	Title	Hours
Core Requirements		
Language requirement (two courses):		6
PRSN 305	Persian Short Stories	
PRSN 306	Persian Language through Literature and Film	
One introductory-level course in Persian Studies:		3
ASIA/PWAD 69	 First-Year Seminar: Wars and Veterans: Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan ¹	
ASIA 124	 Iranian Post-1979 Cinema	
ASIA 126	 Introduction to Persian Literature	
ASIA/WGST 127	 Iranian Women Writers	
Three upper-level courses in Persian Studies:		9
ASIA/CMPL 256	 Love in Classical Persian Poetry	
ASIA/CMPL 258	 Iranian Prison Literature	
ASIA 431	 Persian Sufi Literature	
ASIA/RELI 583	 Religion and Culture in Iran, 1500-Present	
ASIA 692H	 Senior Honors Thesis II	
One Regional course (see list below) ¹		3
One additional elective course, chosen from the following options: ¹		3
An additional course from the introductory-level list		
An additional course from the upper-level list		
An additional course from the Regional list		
Additional Requirements		
Persian through level 4 ²		3
Total Hours		27

¹ No more than one first-year seminar may be included among the eight required major courses.

² The first three levels of Persian (PRSN) can count toward the General Education global language requirement and have not been included as additional hours for the major.


Approved courses taken in UNC–Chapel Hill-sponsored study abroad programs or taken from another institution may count in the concentration. No more than one first-year seminar may be counted among the eight major courses.

Placement credit (PL) may not be used to meet core requirements for the concentration.

With the approval of the associate chair of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, a student may count a course in directed readings in the concentration in Persian studies. To register, a student must obtain the approval of the associate chair and the faculty member who will supervise the project.

Regional Coursework

To ensure that students learn to place their knowledge of Persian Studies within a broader regional context, students are required to take at least one course about South Asia and India or the Middle East and the Islamicate World.

Code	Title	Hours
South Asia and India Focus Courses		
ASIA 59	 First-Year Seminar: Media Masala: Popular Music, TV, and the Internet in Modern India and Pakistan ¹	3
ASIA 61	 First-Year Seminar: A Tour of South Asia's Regional Art Cinemas ¹	3
ASIA/HIST 135	 History of the Indian Subcontinent to 1750	3
ASIA/HIST 136	History of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh: South Asia since 1750	3
ASIA 152	 Survey of South Asian Cultural History	3
ASIA 163	 Hindi-Urdu Poetry in Performance	3
ASIA/MUSC 164	 Music of South Asia	3
ASIA/WGST 167	 Gender, Sexuality, and Social Justice in South Asia	3
ASIA 228	 Contested Souls: Literature, the Arts, and Religious Identity in Modern India	3
ASIA 231	 Bollywood Cinema	3
ASIA/CMPL 261	 India and Orientalism	3
ASIA 262	 Nation, Film, and Novel in Modern India	3
ASIA/GEOG 267	 South Asia	3
ASIA/HIST 272	Modern South Asia	3
ASIA 331/ HIST 335	 Cracking India: Partition and Its Legacy in South Asia ^H	3
ASIA 332	 The Story of Rama in India	3
ASIA 333	 The Mahabharata: Remembered and Reimagined	3
ASIA/RELI 381	Religions of South Asia	3
ASIA/RELI 382	 The Story of Rama in Indian Culture—Experiential	3
ASIA/RELI 383	 The Mahabharata: Remembered and Reimagined—Experiential	3
ASIA/RELI 386	Dance and Embodied Knowledge in the Indian Context	3
ASIA/HIST 440	Gender in Indian History	3
ASIA 441/ HIST 442	Religion, Co-existence, and Conflict in Pre-Colonial India	3
ASIA/RELI 482	Sex, Gender, and Religion in South Asia	3
ASIA 522	 Beauty and Power in the Classical Indian World	3
ASIA/HIST 557	Fiction and History in India	3
ASIA/RELI 582	 Islam and Islamic Art in South Asia	3
HNUR/RELI 592	Religious Conflict and Literature in India	3
Middle East and the Islamicate World		
ASIA/JWST 60	 First-Year Seminar: Israeli Culture and Society: Collective Memories and Fragmented Identities ¹	3
ASIA 73	 First-Year Seminar: Popular Culture in the Arab World ¹	3
ASIA 74	 First-Year Seminar: Imagining Palestine ¹	3
ASIA/HIST 138	History of Muslim Societies to 1500	3
ASIA/HIST 139	 History of Muslim Societies since 1500	3
ARAB 150	 Introduction to Arab Cultures	3
ARAB 151	 Arabic Literature through the Ages	3
ASIA/RELI 180	 Islam and Muslim Life before 1500	3
ASIA/RELI 181	 Islam and Muslim Life since 1500	3
ASIA/JWST 235	 Israeli Cinema: Gender, Nation, and Ethnicity ^H	3
ASIA/HIST 276	 The Modern Middle East	3
ASIA/HIST/ PWAD 277	 The Conflict over Israel/Palestine	3
ASIA/RELI 279	 Islamic Law, Ethics, and Practice	3
ASIA/WGST 329	 Middle East Women Writers	3
ASIA/JWST 358	 Religion and Tradition in Israeli Cinema, TV, and Literature	3
ASIA/CMPL 359	 Literary Diasporas of the Middle East	3
ASIA/JWST 425	 Beyond Hostilities: Israeli-Palestinian Exchanges and Partnerships in Film, Literature, and Music	3
ARAB/ANTH 432	 Science and Society in the Middle East	3
ARAB 434	 Modern Arabic Literature in Translation	3
ASIA/PWAD 435	 The Cinemas of the Middle East and North Africa	3
ASIA/JWST 436	 Language, Exile, and Homeland in Zionist Thought and Practice	3
ASIA/CMPL 442	 Postcolonial Literature of the Middle East	3
ASIA/GEOG 447	Gender, Space, and Place in the Middle East	3
ARAB 453	 Film, Nation, and Identity in the Arab World	3
ASIA/JWST 462	 The Arab-Jews: Culture, Community, and Coexistence	3
ASIA/WGST 471	 Gender and Sexuality in Middle Eastern Literature	3
ASIA/RELI 485	 Gender and Sexuality in Islam	3
ASIA/RELI 486	 Islam and Feminism/Islamic Feminism	3
ASIA/HIST 536	Revolution in the Modern Middle East	3
ASIA/WGST 537	Women in the Middle East	3
ASIA/HIST 538	The Middle East and the West	3
ASIA/RELI 581	 Sufism	3
ASIA/RELI 584	 The Qur'an as Literature	3
ASIA/RELI 587	 Islam and Sexual Diversity	3
ASIA/ARAB/RELI 681	Readings in Islamicate Literatures	3

^H Honors version available. An honors course fulfills the same requirements as the nonhonors version of that course. Enrollment and GPA restrictions may apply.

¹ No more than one first-year seminar may be included among the eight required major courses.

Sample Plan of Study





Sample plans can be used as a guide to identify the courses required to complete the major and other requirements needed for degree completion within the expected eight semesters. The actual degree plan may differ depending on the course of study selected (second major, minor, etc.). Students should meet with their academic advisor to create a degree plan that is specific and unique to their interests. The sample plans represented in this catalog are intended for first-year students entering UNC–Chapel Hill in the fall term. Some courses may not be offered every term.

The Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies requires that *all* students with prior knowledge of Persian take a placement test. Their beginning language course at UNC is decided by the placement result (not by test credit or transfer credit).

A student's initial placement is the most important determinant of how long it will take to complete the major. It's also important to be aware that almost all Persian language courses are only offered in fall or spring, but not both.

Sample Plan One

This plan is for a student who either is a beginner in Persian, or has some background but has placed into PRSN 101.

First Year	Hours
First-Year Foundation Courses	
IDST 101  College Thriving	1
ENGL 105  English Composition and Rhetoric	3
First-Year Seminar or First-Year Launch (https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/ideas-in-action/first-year-seminars-launches/)	3
IDST 111L  Data Literacy Lab	1
Major Courses	
PRSN 101 Elementary Persian I (fall only)	3
PRSN 102 Elementary Persian II (spring only)	3
Introductory-level course in Persian Studies	3
Hours	17
Sophomore Year	
PRSN 203  Intermediate Persian I (fall only)	3
PRSN 204 Intermediate Persian II (spring only)	3
Upper-level course in Persian studies	3
Hours	9
Junior Year	
PRSN 305 Persian Short Stories (fall only)	3
PRSN 306 Persian Language through Literature and Film (spring only)	3
Upper-level course in Persian studies	3
Upper-level course in Persian studies	3
Hours	12

Senior Year

Regional course	3
Core elective	3
Hours	6
Total Hours	44

Special Opportunities in Asian Studies

Honors in Asian Studies

A candidate for honors in Asian studies will write a substantial paper under the guidance of a faculty member. While researching and writing the honors paper, the student will enroll in ASIA 691H and ASIA 692H. ASIA 692H may count as one of the interdisciplinary courses for the major; ASIA 691H will count for elective credit only. In the case of the concentrations in Arab cultures, Chinese, Japanese, Korean studies, and South Asian studies, ASIA 692H may count toward the major in the concentration.

A committee composed of at least two faculty members will examine the candidate. To be accepted as an honors candidate, a student must meet the University's requirement of a minimum overall grade point average of 3.3, secure the consent of a faculty member in the Asian studies field to act as advisor for the project, and submit a proposal to the associate chair of Asian studies for approval.

Departmental Involvement

The department sponsors a variety of cultural events — lectures, film series, performances, and more — as well as social and informational events where students can get to know each other and faculty members in an informal setting. Faculty members in the department serve as advisors to some of the many Asia-related student organizations on campus, such as the Japan Club, Chinese Conversation Club, Hebrew Table, and more.

Languages across the Curriculum

The department participates in the Languages across the Curriculum (LAC) program, offering a one-credit-hour discussion section that is conducted in Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, or Korean but associated with a variety of courses offered in English, both in Asian studies and in such other departments as history or religious studies. This LAC recitation section offers students the opportunity to use their Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, or Korean language skills in a broader intellectual context.

Libraries

The University has rich collections of books and periodicals on Asia in the relevant Asian languages, as well as in English and other Western languages. Experts in the collection development department for Davis Library are available to help students locate the materials they need. The University also has an outstanding collection of Asian films and other audiovisual materials, housed in the Media Resource Center at House Library.

Speaker Series

The department sponsors an annual speaker series. These events include lectures by prominent artists, scholars, and writers and are often cosponsored by other units on campus.

Study Abroad

UNC–Chapel Hill sponsors several study programs (summer, semester, and yearlong) in China, Egypt, India, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey,

and Vietnam. Asian studies majors are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities to live and study in an Asian setting; UNC-approved study abroad programs also satisfy the experiential education requirement. For further information on these programs and other study abroad opportunities in Asia, contact the UNC Study Abroad Office.

Undergraduate Research

The department actively encourages undergraduate student research. Through classes, advising, and office hours, faculty members guide students toward defining areas of interest, conceptualizing research questions, identifying sources, and writing academic papers. Students may pursue research through independent studies, the senior honors thesis, and study abroad research opportunities such as the Burch Fellowship. Asian studies students have received a variety of competitive research support and travel awards, won regional contests for undergraduate papers, published papers in academic journals, and presented their work at such events as the Senior Colloquium in Asian Studies and the campuswide Annual Celebration of Undergraduate Research in the spring.

Department Programs

Majors

- Asian Studies Major, B.A.–Interdisciplinary Concentration (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/asian-studies-major-ba-general-concentration/>)
- Asian Studies Major, B.A.–Arab Cultures Concentration (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/asian-studies-major-ba-arab-cultures-concentration/>)
- Asian Studies Major, B.A.–Chinese Concentration (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/asian-studies-major-ba-chinese-concentration/>)
- Asian Studies Major, B.A.–Japanese Concentration (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/asian-studies-major-ba-japanese-concentration/>)
- Asian Studies Major, B.A.–Korean Studies Concentration (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/asian-studies-major-ba-korean-concentration/>)
- Asian Studies Major, B.A.–Persian Studies Concentration (p. 1)
- Asian Studies Major, B.A.–South Asian Studies Concentration (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/asian-studies-major-ba-south-asian-studies-concentration/>)

Minors

- Arabic Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/arabic-minor/>)
- Asian Studies Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/asian-studies-minor/>)
- Chinese Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/chinese-minor/>)
- Modern Hebrew Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/modern-hebrew-minor/>)
- Hindi-Urdu Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/hindi-urdu-minor/>)
- Japanese Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/japanese-minor/>)
- Korean Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/korean-minor/>)

- Middle Eastern Languages Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/middle-eastern-languages-minor/>)
- Persian Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/persian-minor/>)
- Southeast Asian Studies Minor (<https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/programs-study/southeast-asian-studies-minor/>)

Graduate Programs

- M.A. in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (<https://catalog.unc.edu/graduate/schools-departments/asian-studies/>)

Courses

- Asian Studies (ASIA) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/asia/>)
- Arabic (ARAB) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/arab/>)
- Chinese (CHIN) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/chin/>)
- Hebrew (HEBR) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/hebr/>)
- Hindi-Urdu (HNUR) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/hnur/>)
- Japanese (JAPN) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/japn/>)
- Korean (KOR) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/kor/>)
- Persian ((<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/prsn/>) PRSN)
- Turkish (TURK) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/turk/>)
- Vietnamese (VIET) (<https://catalog.unc.edu/courses/viet/>)

Contact Information

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